

Issues are  
unique for  
single-officer  
agencies.

# The Challenge of ONE

/Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer

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**L**ittle more than 300 people live in the sleepy town of Bradfordsville.

The city is paved with about a dozen roads between Sam's Restaurant, the best place in town for burgers, and the city's weathered entry sign, which boasts a rich history of more than 170 years.

There is little crime in Bradfordsville. Sure, there are the occasional speeders, petty thieves and stop-sign runners. But the biggest obstacle for the city's police chief is catching drunk drivers passing through after a night at the bars in neighboring wet counties.

On Main Street, just past the city's only stop sign, the police department is housed in a 10-by-12-foot room attached to the town library, which is next door to the town's only food market. There

is only room for one desk in the police station, although Chief Adam Rainwater hopes soon to construct an evidence room and maybe someday hire a right-hand man.

Bradfordsville is home to one of Kentucky's 60 single-officer law enforcement agencies. Forty-four agencies are municipal and county police departments peppered throughout the state. There are eight public school departments, six sheriff's departments and one agency serving the Louisville Housing Authority.

Many issues for one-man departments are similar to those of larger agencies – budget constraints, safety, traffic accidents and employee benefits. But for most one-man departments, the biggest difference is juggling the administrative issues of running a department as well as catching criminals, filing paperwork, appearing in court and maintaining com-

munity relations in a single 40-hour work week.

Wurtland Police Chief Phillip Piercy, head of the one-man department for 15 years, said even with overtime, there never is enough time in a week.

"I have two schools, an industrial parkway, a river port with an industrial park, three highways and a railroad that runs through here," Piercy said. "I've got a nursing home inside my city limits, about seven railroad crossings, a bunch of thieves and drug addicts, and a dollar store. And one red light.

"... My main problem is time," Piercy said. "And time leads to money."

Wurtland is home to a little more than 1,000 people, but the population increases during weekdays when workers come into town from Ohio, West Virginia and other areas of the county, Piercy said. On average, he answers less than 500 calls annually in the city, but also assists surrounding agencies on at least that many runs, he said.

### Cooperation

Assistance, Piercy said, is key to running a one-man show. Without cooperation from surrounding agencies, the community members who pay taxes for protection would go without law enforcement whenever their chief or sheriff was off duty.

"The other agencies try to cover for me if I am home and I'm having family time or whatever," Piercy said. "I ask them to call me no matter what so I know what's going on. But the problem we are running into here is not the officers. They understand and want to help. But the other cities' powers that be, the city councils and mayors ... they are the ones who don't understand."

Wurtland is located in Greenup County, and is adjacent to the Worthington, Raceland and Gree-

nup police departments as well as the Greenup County Sheriff's Office. The city of Wurtland has an unfunded interlocal agreement with the sheriff's office, Greenup police and Worthington police, Piercy said, for mutual aid. With a department budget of just over \$66,000 annually — including the chief's salary and benefit costs — the agency does not have money to spend on mutual aid, Piercy said.

"Greenup and the sheriff's office mainly help the most," he said. "Raceland, they don't like to help at all because their city council wants money."

Dry Ridge Police Chief Rick Kells said his department is unique in that the city of Dry Ridge can afford to pay surrounding agencies for their assistance. Annually, the city pays \$132,000 to other departments for their mutual aid. Additionally, the Dry Ridge department, the state's only accredited one-man department, is located in the same city as Kentucky State Police Post 6.

"That makes it a lot better for me," Kells said. "They have a lot of resources."

Those resources particularly come in handy when dealing with Interstate 75, Kells said, which runs through his jurisdiction.

"Major accident scenes, fatal accidents – they are a mess," Kells said. "One man cannot do it. The state police have reconstructionists and they will come [process] a scene for me. It is really convenient for me that they have the equipment where I do not."

### Safety

While the cooperation of nearby agencies is good to have, sometimes in rural parts of the state, it is not enough. Bradfordsville's Chief Rainwater said safety is one of his biggest concerns.

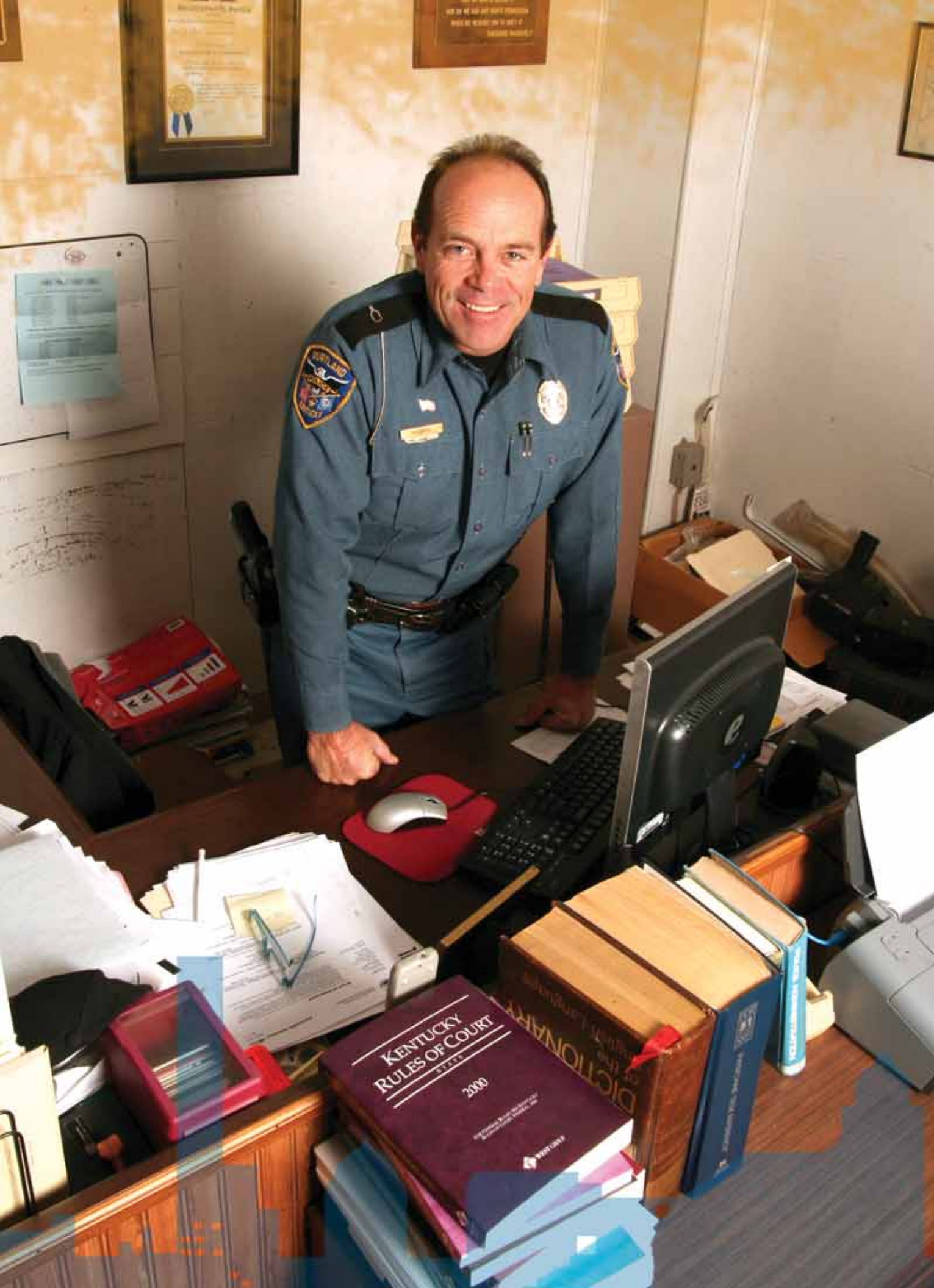
"There is always a danger aspect of being a one- >>

▼ There is little noise on a sunny afternoon on Bradfordsville's Main Street. Police Chief Adam Rainwater enforces the law in a community of a little more than 300 people.



/Photos by Elizabeth Thomas





>> man department,” Rainwater said. “Me being out here on this end of the county, unless a sheriff’s unit is close, if I need backup it takes them quite a few minutes to get out here. ... There have been a couple times I have had to call for backup. I have had two pursuits since I have been here and it just gets kind of edgy sometimes.”

Sebree Police Chief Randy Durbin agreed.

“One of the hardest things is if you are working domestics,” Durbin said. “There are not a lot of times that you have a [sheriff’s] deputy available because he has to answer calls, too, for the county. You put yourself in a bad situation with a domestic because you are dealing with two people who are mad already, trying to keep them separated and find out what is going on.”

Safety also can be an issue when investigating drug complaints. Sebree has what Durbin considers a small drug problem, primarily dealing with the abuse and sale of crystal meth, he said. In a community of about 1,600 people, being a chief who was born and raised in the town he polices makes undercover work and surveillance not only difficult, but also dangerous.

“It makes it a little bit harder,” Durbin said. “A lot of times I change, I drive my wife’s vehicle and kind of get into something different to change the look.”

### Money

Where the safety concerns end, the financial ones begin. In most cases, Durbin said he tries to do enough surveillance to check license plates and traffic going to and from a suspected drug-selling residence so that he eventually can pass along that information to state police detectives to work the

case. But with limited money to pursue drug activity, that is the best he can do.

The city of Sebree operates its police department on a budget of about \$60,000 each year. What money there is after salary and expenses has to pay for items that are daily necessities, he said.

“Our main thing is, as far as funding, it is hard for us to even come up with a police car,” Durbin said. “So our funding is our biggest issue. If it wasn’t for House Bill 413 and the grants that we get – I have to take advantage of them all I can and buy some equipment to equip the car. (House Bill 413 changed the way money is distributed to police departments resulting from offense citations.) If it wasn’t for that, it would be rough for us to even have [a police department].”

Rainwater also struggles to get the things he needs. The entire city of Bradfordsville operates on little more than half of what Sebree’s police budget is annually. The total budget Rainwater has to work with is approximately \$18,500.

Rainwater’s salary of \$14,560 is included in that budget, with a small portion of that set aside as the city’s matching funds for his social security. The other \$3,000 annually is for gas for Rainwater’s cruiser and repairs. To save money, Rainwater said he tries to do all the vehicle repairs he can himself.

Luckily, Rainwater receives his Kentucky Law Enforcement Foundation Program Fund incentive pay, which brings his bi-monthly paychecks up from \$434.55 to \$541.19 after taxes. There is no money available for health insurance, retirement or overtime, he said.

“Realistically, there is never hardly a week that goes by that I just have 40 hours in,” Rainwater said. >>

◀ Inside a square, yellow brick building containing Wurland’s city hall and post office lies Police Chief Phillip Piercy’s tiny office, where his desk is encompassed in files, evidence, books, supplies and equipment he uses to run the one-man department.



>> “Even though I do not get paid overtime, if I work 48 hours this week, I feel kind of guilty about taking another eight hours off because that is one less day that the people here in Bradfordsville will have somebody patrolling. So I just come in and work anyway.”

Even grant money can be hard to come by for such a small department, he said.

“I try,” Rainwater said. “I cannot find a lot of grants out there that offer much for such small departments as mine. That is one of the things I have seen that is a problem with some of the grants. I have been denied a few, and it seems like that the larger counties and the larger police departments get all the funding and they have revenue coming in. And a small town like Bradfordsville here, we don’t have anything. We have a 1995 Crown Vic for a police cruiser that should have been retired five years ago.”

### Consolidation

While Rainwater said there has not been talk of consolidating the department with one of the surrounding agencies, he said he and the town’s mayor have discussed working out an agreement with county officials to pick up Rainwater’s retirement and/or insurance in exchange for extending his patrol further into the county. However, the department as it is today still would remain, Rainwater said.

Wurtland’s Chief Piercy said he, too, has talked to the Greenup police chief about consolidating with their department, but their conversations still

are just that so far.

“We were talking about if Greenup would take my patrol unit and equipment and, just as an example, 70 percent of my budget, then Wurtland would be saving 70 percent but Greenup would get another officer for maybe a fifth of the cost it would take to hire a new officer. Plus, Wurtland would have 24-hour protection.

“But there would have to be a stipulation that I go,” Piercy said. “I would not expect to go as chief, but I would not expect to lose money, either. Greenup does not have retirement, and I would not expect to lose my retirement either.”

On the other hand, Piercy said the community likes having the police department in town, even if there is just one officer. Over the years, Piercy has developed relationships with the community and said he takes special care in responding to their calls — more care than what he considers one of the outside agencies typically would do during his time off.

“I try to be here myself and work because, and nothing against [the other agencies], I just do not feel that they are going to treat the people who live here the way I would. They may come in and take a call and know they are not coming back for six months or three months or whatever, where I see these people every day. I am not saying they are going to treat them badly, but they may not give them the tender loving care that I would.”

In fact, the community response to consolidation is one of the reasons the city of Dry Ridge re-

established its police department. The department previously was a six-officer agency, but decided three years ago to merge with the Grant County Sheriff’s Office.

“For one reason or another, it was not working out,” Kells said of the merger. “A lot of the businesses and residents liked the personal touch [of having a department in Dry Ridge]. They missed that and we are getting back to that now.”

After two years of consolidation, the departments split and Kells was hired to re-establish both the Dry Ridge department and the connection with the community.

“As far as I can tell, it seems to be working,” Kells said of re-establishing the department as a one-man operation. “I think it is working better than people expected, but that is just because of the good working relationship we have with other agencies. One guy cannot do it all.” J

## \$28,764

average, annual salary for single-officer agency heads in 2008

## 70%

single-officer agencies reporting some health insurance coverage

## 1/2

the number of single-officer agencies reporting CERS enrollment

\*Information courtesy of Kentucky League of Cities

▼ Sebree Police Chief Randy Durbin visits one of the town’s oldest businesses, Bell’s Drugs, as part of his patrolling routine. Durbin is a life-long resident of Sebree and said he enjoys working for its citizens.





# LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS

A comparison of annual calls for service, population and budgets for Kentucky's single-officer departments.

## Caneyville P.D.

Calls: 335\*  
Population: 657  
Budget: \$72,570

## Clarkson P.D.

Population: 831  
Budget: \$43,000

## Clay P.D.

Population: 1,160

## Cloverport P.D.

Population: 1,236  
Budget: \$89,300

## Crab Orchard P.D.

Calls: 383  
Population: 862  
Budget: \$68,885

## Dry Ridge P.D.

Calls: 723\*  
Population: 2,200  
Budget: \$253,850

## Earlington P.D.

Population: 1,574

## Elkhorn City P.D.

Population: 1,009

## Ferguson P.D.

Calls: 925  
Population: 1,009

## Fountain Run P.D.

Population: 241

## Gallatin Co. P.D.

Calls: 376  
Population: 8,035  
Budget: \$39,600

## Gamaliel P.D.

Population: 431  
Population: 31,880

## Glencoe P.D.

Calls: 113  
Population: 255  
Budget: \$62,615

## Hawesville P.D.

Population: 978  
Budget: \$50,000\*

## Hurstbourne Acres

Population: 1,573

## Hustonville P.D.

Population: 354

## Lewisburg P.D.

Calls: 456  
Population: 916  
Budget: \$94,481

## Louisville Housing

Budget: \$110,426

## Loyall P.D.

Population: 710

## Lynch P.D.

Population: 828

## Mt. Olivet P.D.

Population: 277

## New Castle P.D.

Calls: 132  
Population: 910  
Budget: \$52,432

## Nortonville P.D.

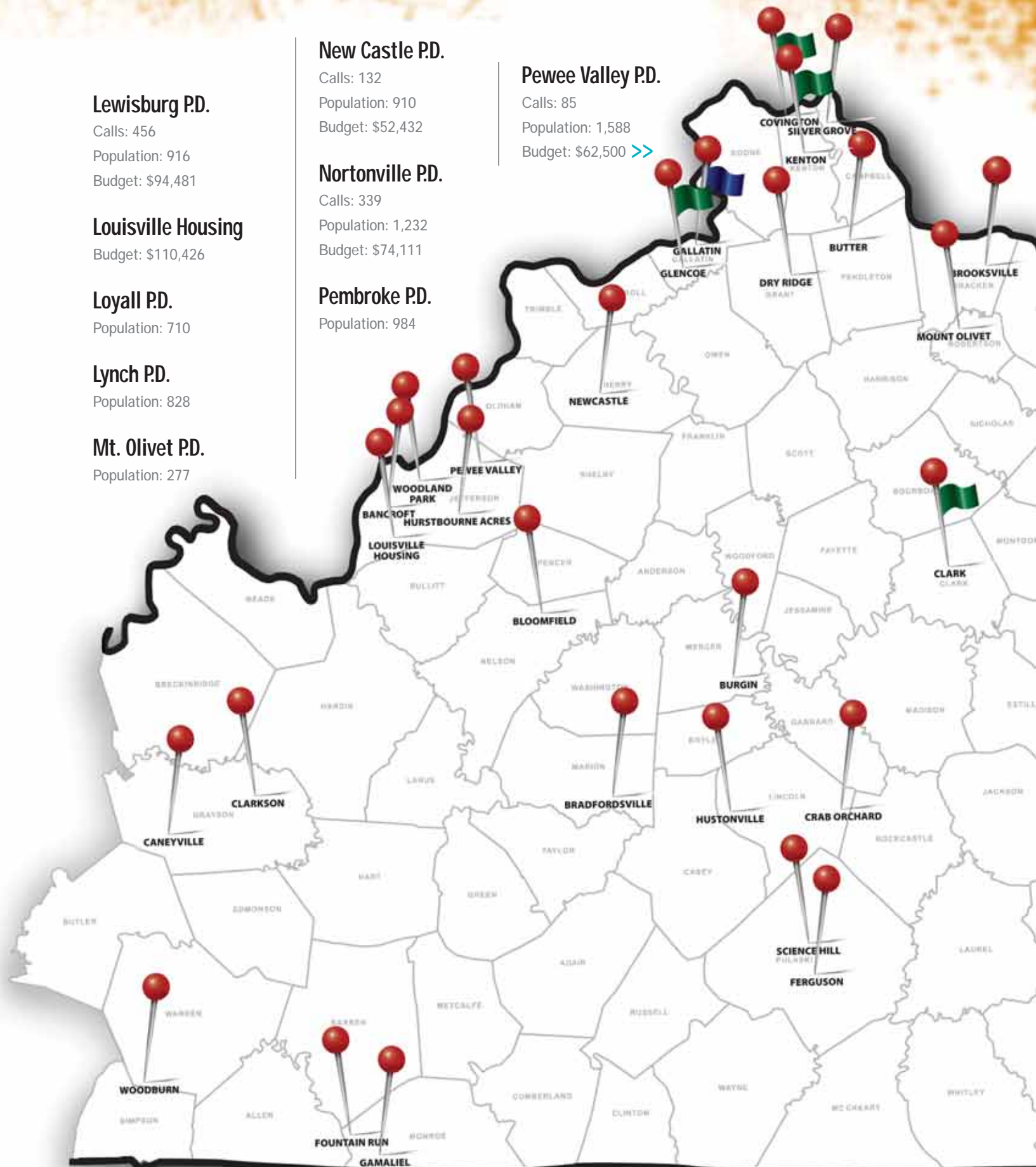
Calls: 339  
Population: 1,232  
Budget: \$74,111

## Pembroke P.D.

Population: 984

## Pewee Valley P.D.

Calls: 85  
Population: 1,588  
Budget: \$62,500 >>





>> Pippa Passes P.D.

Population: 282

Science Hill P.D.

Population: 665

Sebree P.D.

Calls: 290

Population: 1,535

Budget: \$60,818

Silver Grove P.D.

Population: 1,160

South Shore P.D.

Population: 1,243

Trenton P.D.

Population: 423

Wayland P.D.

Population: 290

Wheelwright P.D.

Population: 1,029

Wingo P.D.

Population: 594

Woodburn P.D.

Population: 346

Woodlawn Park P.D.

Population: 1,092

Wurtland P.D.

Calls: 482

Population: 1,048

Budget: \$66,324

Carlisle Co. Sheriff

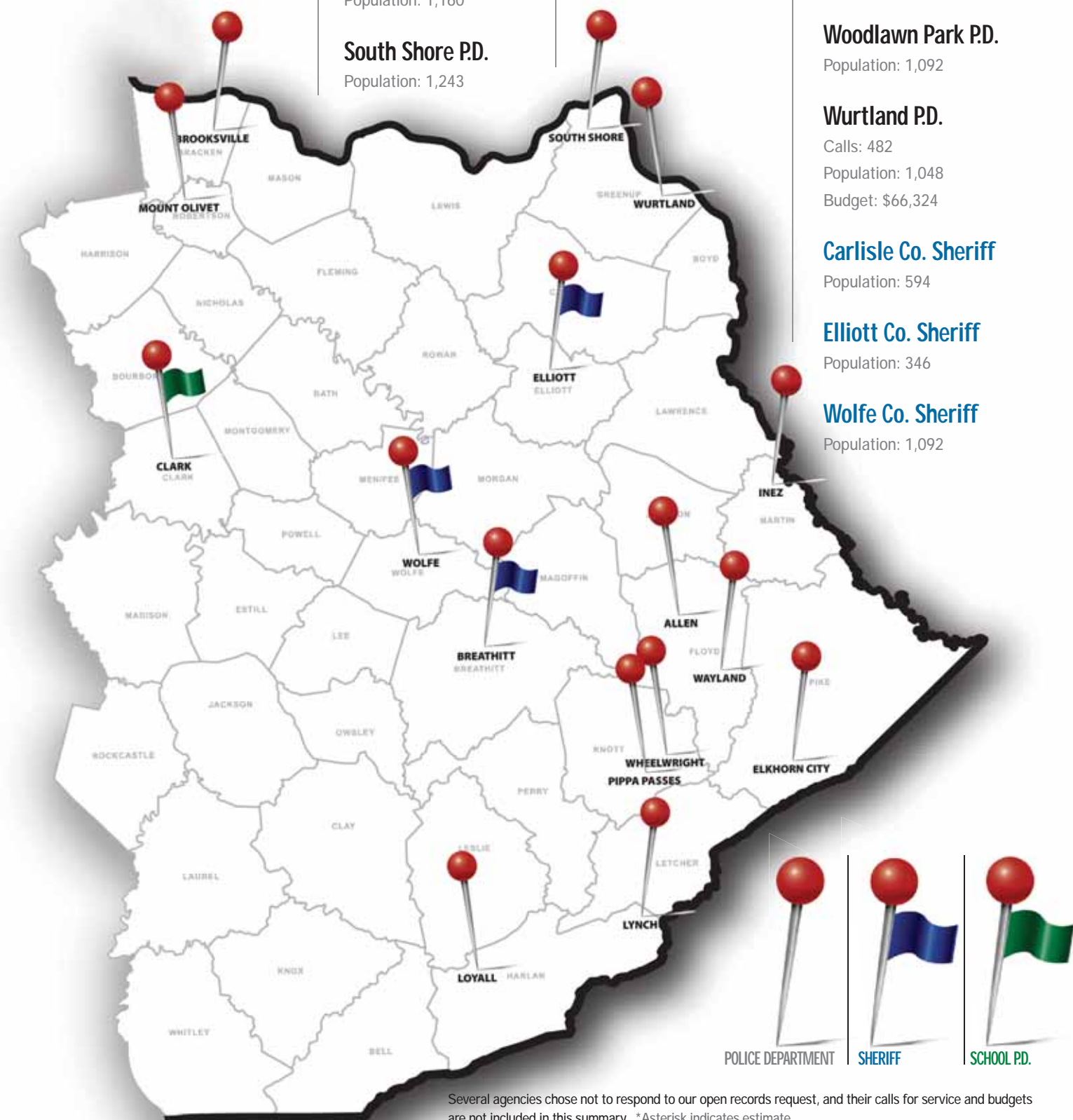
Population: 594

Elliott Co. Sheriff

Population: 346

Wolfe Co. Sheriff

Population: 1,092



Several agencies chose not to respond to our open records request, and their calls for service and budgets are not included in this summary. \*Asterisk indicates estimate.

# Officers See Benefits of Being One-man Agency

/Kelly Foreman, Public Information Officer

Being the only sheriff in town (or chief, as the case may be) is not without its perks.

In Wurtland, Police Chief Phillip Piercy said it is not uncommon to find him on warm summer days sitting on a front porch with one of Wurtland's citizens, drinking sweet tea and watching the clouds roll by.

"The people are good to me here in the city," Piercy said. "When I first came to work here, me and my wife bought a little house ... and we would wake up in the morning and find bags of beans and ears of corn and stuff on our front porch and things like that."

Bradfordsville Police Chief Adam Rainwater said the people in his community are one of his favorite things about the job.

"You won't find another city anywhere in the state that has as much heart as these people do," he said. "It is nice. And that is the main thing I really do like about Bradfordsville, because it is

such a small town, you get to know everybody. I hate to refer to [anything] as the Andy Griffith show, but that is kind of what it is like. It is kind of like a little Mayberry."

The only downfall to becoming so invested in a community sometimes can be that those people forget that single-officer agencies cannot work 24 hours a day. Piercy, Rainwater and Dry Ridge Police Chief Rick Kells all said it was not uncommon for citizens to occasionally come knocking on their doors or ringing their personal cell phones when they are off duty.

"The general public, they do not understand the way we work," Kells said. "They just see a uniform."

When people began learning where he lived, Kells said he did "all the night-shift tricks" such as dismantling his doorbell to avoid having his sleep interrupted when he was home.

Piercy even had one couple drive into his front yard to have him settle their domestic dispute once, he said.

"The lady was drunk and she and her husband were having a domestic," he said. "Her husband was on the hood of the car and she just drove down, stopped in front of my house and he rolled off in my yard. He went to jail for assault and she went to jail for drunk driving."

But besides the small-town communities, all of the chiefs said they enjoyed being their own boss and not being subjected to many of the administrative hassles larger departments deal with on a regular basis.

"In my opinion, when people talk about all the stress on police, so much of it is not the criminals, it is administration," Kells said. "The more people you have, the more headaches you have with all the different personalities."

"It is difficult when you can't just shut down and go home because there is nobody else to pick it up," Kells continued. "But the job is not really that hard. Be in uniform, be where you are supposed to be and do what you are supposed to do." ■



Following up on a complaint from the previous day, Dry Ridge Police Chief Rick Kells stopped in to talk with a business owner, a personal touch he said the community missed when the department previously was consolidated with the local sheriff's office.